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CORRESPONDENCE

5

BETWEEN

His Excellency Gov. Williams,

AND

James W. Bramham, Esq.

RESPECTING

The publication of certain Letters written by Mr. Bramham to John W. Eppes and Thomas M. Randolph, Esquires.

NATCHEZ:

PRINTED BY ANDREW MARSCHALK.

1808.

CORRESPONDENCE, &c:

IT will be recollected by the citizens of this territory, and of Adams County in particular, that on the fourth Monday in July last, (being the day of election) a hand-bill was circulated, containing amongst other things, copies of two letters addressed by me to my friends in Virginia; the one to Col. Thomas M. Randolph, and the other to John W. Eppes, Esquire, both sons-in-law to the President of the United States, and the latter gentleman a member of Congress from that state —I was astonished at finding copies of my letters thus exposed; and on enquiry, found, that governor Williams had procured their publication, and circulation, and had said that they were forwarded to him from the city of Washington; in consequence of which, I immediately wrote to those two gentlemen, on the subject; an answer to the one to Colonel Randolph I herewith submit, which I received on Friday, the 21st instant. I have not as yet received an answer to the one addressed to Mr. Eppes, when I do I will give it publicity. I have thought proper to lay the subject before the public, together with the correspondence, between the governor and myself relative thereto, since I received Colonel Randolph's answer: and I am convinced when the situation of the Post-Office establishment at this place is taken into consideration, every reflecting mind must be satisfied of the manner in which copies of the letters in question were obtained.

JAMES W. BRAMHAM.

Town of Washington, 25th October 1802.

Town of Washington, (M. T.) August 5th, 1808.

DEAR SIR,

I wrote you two letters last winter; they were designed to facilitate the views of our delegate, and give you the outlines of what I thought to be our political sufferings and privations: lately however, I have to my astonishment, discovered they were applied to a different purpose: a copy of one of them has been procured by the governor, and given to the federalists of this country, and a few days past was published here in a handbill, one of which I inclose you (it being on the day of election) I suppose as an electioneering *trick*, in order to defeat the republican ticket for the county of Adams. *I am not unwilling those letters should come to public view, because they contain* solemn *facts, which cannot be controverted:* but I am sorry that you should deliver over the letter to the friends of Governor Williams, as it is said by them, for the purpose of enquiring into the truth of its contents; it implied strongly your doubt of my veracity: in that light it might operate against me here. I would therefore thank you to state explictly the causes which induced you to dispose of it in the manner which it is said you have. In the interin.

I am your friend,
And humble servant,
JAMES W. BRAMHAM.

Colonel Thomas M. Randolph,
Edge Hill, Virginia.

Monticello, Virginia, September 14th, 1808.

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 5th ult. came to my hands in a month from its date. I thank you for your hesitation in crediting what was told you of my having given your letter of January 27th, 1808, into the hands of some person connected with your political opponents in the M. T. to be made use of on their side, in the late election contest. The printed copy you inclosed me is indeed an exact copy of your favor of January 27th, but most certainly that copy was never obtained from me nor has your letter to my knowledge ever been read by another person than myself. I found it immediately on receiving your last, in my letter bundle, where I had

placed it, and from which it could not have been taken for the purpose. A copy procured in a very different way I suspect has been used, as I have been at home myself constantly since I received it, and no person in the least connected with the territory, or even acquainted with it's affairs, has been at the house to my knowledge, nor in such case could it have been obtained, as it lay in a considerable bundle of letters, in a locked bureau: I cannot with the utmost exertion of my powers of recollection call to mind, my ever having shewn the letter in question, or even read a passage of it to another; although I should have deemed it perfectly innocent to have read the parts manifestly not meant as secret and confidential, to such of my friends as might have taken interest in the information they give.

You having added a P. S. on the third page relative to general Moreau, has been the cause of the *back* of your letter being preserved, and there are strong marks of its having been opened before I received it. The seal was a common bright red wafer, around the whole edge of which appears at present a glutinous substance of a different and much darker shade of red approaching to Spanish brown;—Your last has a bright red wafer, without the brown margin, which in the other is so manifest, and which must have been applied to the paper at a different time from the wafer, as in passing the finger over, you do not perceive the elavation on the paper, which that always causes until it has crossed the margin described. The date of your letter is the 27th, the post mark the 30th of January, leaving an interval of three days, between your seal, and the mail, for the operation suspected. The fact of two letters of the same date, to two gentlemen one hundred and twenty miles apart, having been copied at the same time or near it, corroborates my suspicion that it was done in the territory, where alone the motive to such an action existed." [Here follows a sketch of political information of some length, which, as it is not connected with the present subject, is deemed unnecessary to detail.] "I hope to have the pleasure of hearing from you often. and having now obtained some leisure, from the drudgeries of h[illegible]bandry, shall have it in my power to communicate what I may consider

worth your notice, out of what comes to my knowledge.

Most respectfully and sincerely yours,

TH: M. RANDOLPH.

James W. Bramham, esq. attorney at law,
Washington, Mississippi Territory.

Washington, Saturday Morning, Oct. 22, 1808.

SIR,

Recent occurrences have rendered it indispensibly necessary, that you should state to me, how, and from whom, you obtained copies of certain letters of mine addressed to Thomas M. Randolph and John W. Eppes, Esquires, which were published here last summer in hand-bills, and circulated on the day of the election for representatives of Adams county.

I hope as the subject materially interests me, that you will be prompt in your reply to this note.

I am your most obt.

JAMES W. BRAMHAM.

His excellency Gov. Williams.

Washington, 22d October, 1808.

SIR,

Your note of this morning I have received. I have no objection to a personal interview with you, relative to its object, at any time and place which will suit your convenience.

I am, &c.

(Signed) ROBERT WILLIAMS.

James W. Bramham, Esq.

Washington, October 22, 1808.

SIR,

I have received your note of this morning, in answer to mine of the same date. I should have no objection to a personal interview on any other subject than the one alluded to in my note, but it is of such a nature that the result of a mere conversation would not be satisfactory: and surely you have no objections to reduce it to writing, when it will tend to facilitate a view which I have in detecting the perfidy of some of

my clandestine enemies. I hope you will not hesitate in gratifying me on this subject.

I am yours, &c.

JAMES W. BRAMHAM.

His excellency Governor Williams.

Saturday Evening, October 22, 1808.

SIR,

I have received your second note of this date, I shall not be indisposed to state any information I may give you, relative to the object of your enquiry, on a personal interview, in writing.

I am yours,

(Signed) ROBERT WILLIAMS.

James W. Bramham. Esq.

Sunday Evening 5 o'clock, October 23, 1808.

SIR,

Your note of last evening was handed to me this moment by your private secretary, Capt. Neal, a visit to the country for the last twenty-four hours, has probably been the cause of my not receiving it sooner: In reply I have only to observe, that nothing short of an unequivocal statement in writing will answer my purpose in the present inquiry. And that what you could state in writing, in a personal interview, you cannot hesitate with propriety to communicate in the same manner without that interview. The bearer hereof will wait for your reply to this note.

I am. &c.

JAMES W. BRAMHAM.

His Excellency Governor Williams.

Sunday Night, October 23, 1808.

SIR,

The reason I did not answer your third note by the messenger is, that it was handed to me in company, and the bearer departed before I knew its contents or who from.

The indisposition you discover to the cause pointed out in my two former notes, in answer to yours, and the peremptory style of your last note, create no dis-

position or obligations on my part to comply with your request.

You are therefore informed, that I do not consider myself bound to give the information required, only at discretion, and by knowing the proposed and specific objects, nor am I disposed to give such as can only tend to expose the carelessness, want of caution, or misplaced and innocent confidence of ourselves or friends, thereby leading to disagreeable results, without producing any good. I trust the above hints will *preclude* any further and similar applications on this subject. I am respectfully,

(Signed,) ROBERT WILLIAMS.

James W. Bramham, Esq.

P. S. You mention in one of your notes, the object you have in view is to detect the perfidy of some of your clandestine enemies. In this I shall always be disposed to aid you or any other gentleman; but that might not be the case in the present instance.

R. W.

Washington, Monday Evening, 24th Oct. 1808.

SIR,

Parke Walton Esquire, handed to me your note of last evening, early this morning: be assured sir that the requisition which I made in my first letter to you of Saturday morning, (through your private secretary capt. Neal) and which I have insisted upon throughout this correspondence, I did not consider as a favor but as an independent right; and that when you refuse to give the information sought, you take upon yourself the resulting consequences. This subject and the several notes which have passed touching it, were not the offspring of political or party motives, notwithstanding the light in which you view them, or the manner in which they, may terminate, and that it is not important to me at this particular crisis, what your disposition in relation thereto may be, because I can resort to documents in my possession, to establish to the world the fact which I expected you would have been candid enough to admit, and indeed more than it is probable you would have been disposed to acknowledge, and which may peradventure lead to an

unpleasant result. The "above hints" will perhaps dictate to you the propriety of pursuing a different course than the one which it seems you have determined on, of which this is not designed to preclude you. I am &c.

JAMES W. BRAMHAM.

P. S. If you feel inclined to reply to this letter it must be done by 12 o'clock, or the correspondence will be considered as at an end. J. W. B.

His Excellency Governor Williams.

It having been pretty currently circulated among a certain party within a few days past, that a publication was to be made in the Newspapers relative to some letters written by Mr. Bramham, containing the most infamous falsehoods on the governor of this territory, and vilest slander on five sixths of its officers. This report deriving credit from an application, and the mode thereof, by the said Bramham to me, relative to the publication of said letters, induces the following remarks, which I request you will give a place after any such statement which may be offered you for publication.—Copies of those letters I received from the hands of a gentleman of the first respectability and standing in this territory. I shewed, read, and made their contents known to several gentlemen equally respectable, (though in private and casual conversations,) for the purpose of exposing the falsities and misrepresentations of the party here, (which it seemed this young man, author of them, had been made the instrument of doing, having but lately arrived in the country, being a republican, and having acquaintances of high standing in the states of similar political denomination.) These letters were afterwards published—not by me. After which Mr. Bramham and myself conversed freely on the subject of them. The particulars of which it does not become me to relate, except that he acknowledged he had been deceived and misinformed by this party in opposition to the administration.

Here the thing rested till within a few days, when Mr. Bramham commenced an enquiry of me respec-

ting those letters, in a manner and style to which I was not disposed to yield compliance; still giving him assurances of my disposition to gratify him on a personal interview, and after, in writing, should he require it, which my notes in answer will shew, if he will give them publicity. I relate their substance from recollection, and disposition only, not having kept copies, being in the bustle of business and company when I received and answered them, except the last which I did not condescend to answer at all.

From this and such statements as Mr. Bramham must be bound to make, if any, it will be seen, that nothing was more easy than for him to have obtained in the most complete manner, the information he sought. But no—this seems not to have been his object. An attack the most infamous was necessary to subserve the party, and knowing my silence and disregard to the unceasing attempts of the kind heretofore, they have no apprehensions now; and in this they would have been still gratified, were it notthat I understand they mean to include the official character and integrity of my young friend and connection, the post master at this place, who is now in North-Carolina, and whom they dare not thus assail was he present.—That Mr. Bramham should have written those letters, as he states, at the request, (and of course the knowledge of his party,) kept copies, shewed, and conversed about them; and then make the fuss he has, and avoid the information which a respectable and specific application as to the object would have afforded him, can only be equalled, & now is explained by the perfidy of the present attempt. Of such a babbling disposition are the most of those office-hunters, and political Jackals, that they keep nothing secret. Those letters and their contents, together with many others of the like kind, were well known here long before these copies fell into my hand.

ROBERT WILLIAMS.

Washington, October 26, 1808.

THE object of the present publication is to exhibit the affidavit of Beverly R. Grayson, Esq. clerk of the supreme court of this territory, to shew that governor Williams has *undertaken* to account for the manner in which he obtained copies of my letters to col. Randolph, and Mr. Eppes, in at least two different ways. In his reply to my publication in your last paper, he says "copies of those letters I received from the hands of a gentleman of the first respectability and standing in this territory" and that they were not published by him. To Mr. Grayson, it appears, he stated *that they were in his possession, and had been forwarded to him from the city of Washington, and that he should publish them at a seasonable time*, the public may believe either or neither, of his, (the governors) statements according to the dictates of their own conscience. JAMES W. BRAMHAM

Town of Washington, 1st Nov. 1808.

BEVERLY R. GRAYSON maketh oath, that sometime in the month of May last, in the course of a conversation, had with Governor Williams, by his solicitation; he informed me, as well as I can at this time recollect, that some of the gentlemen of this place had written on to the general government, relative to his administration, and that among the number that had written, was James W. Bramham, Esq. and stated to me a part of the substance of these letters: in one he said it was stated, that he (the Governor) would appoint no man to office unless he was the personal and political enemy of Mr. Jefferson, and think he informed me that it was Mr. Bramham that had written to that effect: he also stated, that those letters or copies of them, were in his possession, and had been forwarded to him from the City of Washington, and that he should publish them at a seasonable time—this was my impression formed from the conversation above mentioned. I give the above statement at the request of Mr. Bramham, being called on for the purpose.

(Signed) B. R. GRAYSON.

Sworn and subscribed before me, this 31st day of October, 1808. (Signed) WALTER LEAKE.

Washington, November 14th, 1808.

HAVING been compelled to leave home on the 9th inst. in order to attend the circuit court in Wilkinson county, I left in the hands of Col. Ferdinand L. Claiborne, a manuscript for publication in your paper, of the 9th, which you will herewith receive, marked A. I this morning received a letter from Col. Claiborne on the subject, marked B. which is explanatory of the motive by which he was actuated in withholding the publication marked A.—I desire you to publish the letter of Colonel Claiborne to me, together with its enclosures.

JAMES W. BRAMHAM.

A.

Washington, 4th November, 1808.

MR. MARSHALL,

I herewith send to you for publication, documents to shew the result of the enquiry I have made relative to the manner in which copies of my letters to col. Randolph and Mr. Eppes, were obtained. On Tuesday the 1st inst. I was waited on by William Thomson, Esquire, attorney general of the Orleans territory, and as the representative of the governor *in this transaction*, with a verbal communication from the governor, touching the copies of the letters in question, which I refused to receive in that *manner*; Mr. Thomson retired, and in a few minutes returned with the object of his first visit to me reduced to writting, which will be found marked No. 1: On the third inst. I called at the house of Mr. William Turner, in the city of Natchez, and stated to him the course the investigation had taken, and the substance of Mr. Thomson's letter to me; when Mr. Turner *voluntarily* furnished me with the certificate, marked No. 2. I was further authorised by Mr. Turner, and also by a gentleman of high standing and veracity and the intimate friend of Mr. Turner, to state, that the governor had declared to Mr. Turner on an interview, that he had received copies of the letters with which he had furnished Mr. Turner, from M. Parke Walton, and that Mr. Walton had positively denied the fact to Mr. Turner and his friend. In order to have the subject

fully before the public, I addressed Mr. Wilson a short note, and received his answer, which will be found marked No. 3 and 4. The documents are now before the public, in a clear and perspicuous manner, from whence they can draw the proper conclusions.

I am yours, &c.

JAMES W. BRAMHAM.

No. I.

November 1st, 1808.

SIR,

I have communicated to his excellency Governor Williams, your determination that you would receive no communications touching the subject of the letters addressed by yourself to Mr. Randolph and Mr. Eppes, unless reduced to writing. *The governor, solicitous to give every species of information which would tend to elucidate this transaction, desired me to inform you, that copies of the letters were received by him from William Turner, Esquire, of Natchez, and to refer you to him as the source.* As at this time all personal communication has ceased between his excellency and yourself, he deems it improper to address you in writting.

I have the honor to be yours with respect.

(Signed.) WILLIAM THOMSON.

James W. Bramham, esq. Washington.

No. II.

Natchez, November 3, 1808.

Mr. James W. Bramham, having requested of me to know from whom I received copies of certain letters, written by him to Mr. Eppes and Mr. Randolph, of Virginia, which letters were lately published here in the Weekly Chronicle. *I do hereby certify that I received them from the hands of Governor Williams, and gave him back the same copies.*

(Signed.) WILLIAM TURNER.

No. III.

Washington, 3d November 1808.

SIR,

I am authorized to state, that governor Williams has said, that he received *from you*, copies of my letters to-

Mr. Randolph and Mr. Eppes. I have therefore thought proper to call on you through my *friend Col. Claiborne* to avow or disavow the same.

I am your most obt.

JAMES W. BRAMHAM.

Park Walton, Esquire.

No. IV.

November 3, 1808.

SIR,

I received your letter of this days date: I never furnished to governor Williams copies of the letters which you allude to.

(Signed.) PARKE WALTON.

James W. Bramham, Esquire.

TO THE PUBLIC.

VARIOUS statements and reports having been made and circulated, against the governor of this territory, calculated to injure his private and political character, by men whom from their relative standing he did not feel himself bound to satisfy, by any other explanation than that which would have been readily given at all times on a personal interview, it becomes necessary for him at this crisis, to request that the public, as well as those hitherto attached to the administration of this and the general government, and the officers holding appointments under them, should wait the result of a developement, which will be made, and by which it will be seen, that integrity and candor, are liable to imposition and duplicity.

This the governor pledges himself to do, if not to the satisfaction of a certain class of characters, to that of the public, and of those whose good opinions it has been his pride to possess.

November 8, 1808.

B

Soldiers Retreat, 14th November 1808.

DEAR SIR,

I am happy in your return from Wilkinson court: you no doubt was much surprized when you met with the Natchez newspapers, on observing the governors address to the public, requesting the good people of this territory to "wait the result of the developement," of certain reports, and not finding the certificates of Messrs. Turner and Walton, which you left with me for publication. Incloſed are the papers committed to my care, together with two others, No. 1 and 2, that will have a tendency to further develope the transaction in question between yourself and the governor so far as I have been accidentally concerned, and will I trust warrant the delay of your publication, particularly, when I assure you, I had no idea of governor Williams' making any further statement during your absence, and I am of the opinion that Mr. Thomson, who visited me as the counsel and *authorised friend* of the governor was under the like impression.

With respect, your friend and obt.

FERDINAND L. CLAIBORNE.

James W. Bramham, Esq. Washington.

NO. 1.

Soldiers Retreat, 9th Nov. 1808, 10 oclock at Night.

MESSRS. J. W. WINN, & CO.

Gentlemen,

If your paper of this day is not struck off, and ready for the public, be pleased to dispense with, or suspend for the present, the publication of James W. Bramham, Esq. touching the conduct of governor Williams, relative to certain copies of letters written by said Bramham, to John W. Eppes and Thomas M. Randolph Esquires.

I write as the friend of Mr. Bramham,

respectfully your obt. servant.

FERDINAND L. CLAIBORNE.

[A similar letter was likewise sent to Mr. Marschalk, editor of the "Natchez Gazette."]

NO. II.

9th November, 10 at Night.

I do hereby certify that in consequence of a conversation between governor Williams and myself, in which he announced his determination to resign *immediately*. I have been induced to solicit col. Claiborne, that all publications should be stopped against the governor, and under the impression made by my statement, he has requested of the printers in Natchez, that the publications of Mr. Bramham's certificates should be suspended, until his (Mr. Bramham's) arrival.

(Signed) WILLIAM THOMSON.

Colonel Claiborne not being satisfied with the contents of the above certificate, requested Mr. Thomson to make the following memorandum on the back thereof:—

"The within application was made at the instance of Governor Williams by myself; the object of the communication was to announce the resignation of the Governor, and to solicit from Colonel Claiborne, as the friend of Mr. Bramham, to suspend all further publications, and he agreed to await the arrival of Mr. Bramham.

(Signed) "WILLIAM THOMSON."

The following are copies of the Letters which gave rise to the preceeding correspondence, and which were published in a hand bill from the Natchez Gazette Office, on the fourth Monday in July last.

Washington, (M. T.) January 27, 1808.

DEAR SIR,

The object of the present is to give you a small sketch of the political situation of this country; although I have not the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with you, yet I hope subject will be a sufficient excuse for my frankness:—I arrived here in May last, in company with Judge Leake, I commenced the practice of the law immediately, and endeavoured to acquaint myself as well as the short time would admit of with the people of this territory, and their political situation. I am sorry I am constrained to make an unfavorable report. The complaints of the people against their governor are innumerable, and not without just cause; they are most sorely oppressed, the governor manifests a conduct evidently aristocratical, and in some respects bears a relationship to downright monarchy—he will never appoint a friend of Mr. Jefferson's and the general government, and a republican, to office, if a federalist can be prevailed on to accept, and indeed his appointments are generally made amongst the most inveterate enemies of Mr. Jefferson, both as a man and as a politician, under a pretence too, that such appointments are directed by the general government. Such things injures the character of the government with those who are actually disposed to be friendly—the citizens of the territory are generally disposed to be republican, and support the administration, but unless their grievances are shortly redressed, it will produce in them a very different disposition. They are fearful the President does not pay due attention to them; indeed to this they are advised, that the measures proposed by their delegate are likely to miscary and meet violent opposition. The delegate must be supported in his

measures: *He is specially instructed*, & if they miscarry, I fear it will be productive of dangerous consequences. I conjure you, sir, to assist that gentleman in his endeavours to further the interest of the territory. This address is made at the special instance of a number of respectable inhabitants.

I am, Sir.

Washington, (*M. T.*) *Jan.* 27, 1808.

MY DEAR SIR,

Since I arrived in this territory, I took the liberty of addressing you, in which I gave you a slight sketch of the political situation of our country: for fear that should have miscarried, I again trouble you on the same subject. Our political horizon at present has a very lowering aspect, and if the grievances of the people here are not remedied, and that shortly, it will I fear, be productive of direful consequences. They are naturally disposed to be republican, and support the government of the United States; but they are so much cramped by their executive, that they seem to be in a d[illegible]ding state; added to this, our delegate in congress writes us, he is violently opposed in every measure he introduces for the welfare of the people here, owing to the misrepresentations of a number of persons residing in this territory, whose views are evidently sinister. Depend on it, sir, those things will produce disaffection, vast disaffection. The people cannot bear the idea sir, that their delegate should be thus thwarted in his undertaking, by the false clamors of persons in this territory, who have no hand in the government, and whom they would not trust in any situation—I believe sir, you are well convinced of the regard I have for the general government, and the heads of departments, and I am truly sorry to see the people of this territory oppressed, under pretence of its being sanctioned by the government: Sir, it is injuring the character of the government—I conjure you, sir, use all your exertions with your friends to support our delegate in his undertakings which are not incompatible with the general good.

I mentioned to you in my last letter, that if there was

an appointment to be made in this country, the duties of which office you might suppose I could discharge, that I would be thankful to you to interpose in my behalf—my practice in the profession of the law, far exceeds my highest expectations; In the course of a few months I think it will be equal to any lawyers in this territory.

My friend Judge Leake, has left this for Virginia; you will see him ere this reaches you: I refer you to him for the particulars—as to health, I never enjoyed better any where, and am exceedingly well pleased, except with our internal affairs. *Accept, &c.*

Washington, November 23, 1808.

MR. MARSCHALK,

Please insert the following with the publications alluded to.

R. WILLIAMS.

I observe in your paper of last week, a publication by Mr. Bramham. The want of candor, the mistatements, and mutilations, as well as suppressions of certain information which the public possesses, cannot fail when exposed (which will be done in due time,) to rouse a just indignation in every impartial mind.

My object in noticing this publication at present is, to make known, that the CERTIFICATES OF Mr. THOMSON ARE POSITIVELY FALSE, so far as respects a request on my part to suppress certain publications, or that my intention to resign was influenced by any particular act, or specific charge. This I am ready to verify to the satisfaction of any gentleman who will call on me, and that too, from the declarations of Mr. Thomson himself, on his being charged by me with having given currency to such a report.

The situation in which Mr. Thomson has thought proper to place himself (that of my friend) to the intelligent, when contrasted with his certificates, must lead to a just conclusion, and evidences the treachery and duplicity attempted.

The motives which actuated Mr. Thomson to introduce himself to me on this occasion, (by which I observed to him what I did to others, that of my intentions

to resign the government after the 3d of March next, from motives of private interest, &c. and to make the same public before I left the territory for N. Carolina, from motives of public utility) and what has influenced his extraordinary conduct is only as yet known to me in part, and to be inferred from overtures which he made, and the rapid changes in his situation.

A respect for private character as well as public situation, forbid I should detail transactions and conversations, which it was presumed at the time friendship alone dictated, and sociability alone suggested, thereby imposing a degree of confidence; unless occurrences more important than the present, although such as might be thought retaliation warranted, should render it necessary.

ROBERT WILLIAMS.

Washington 23d Nov. 1808.